

Focus on People

Compiled by Heike Hasenauer



Janotta (above) and Alden: Recruiters of the Year.



THE U.S. Army Recruiting Command announced its active-duty and Reserve recruiters of the year for 2001 during its Annual Leaders Training Conference banquet in Nashville, Tenn. They are **SSG Steven Janotta** from the Phoenix, Ariz., Recruiting Battalion and **SSG Charles Alden** from the Montgomery Recruiting Bn. in Alabama.

The two bested more than 8,000 Army recruiters worldwide. In 2001, both earned their recruiter rings — symbols of recruiting excellence and the second-highest award presented to recruiters — and consistently surpassed established recruiting standards.

Janotta enlisted 41 recruits last year, helping his recruiting station meet its goal and rank number one in the battalion, as well as in the 6th U.S. Army Recruiting Brigade.

Janotta enlisted in 1988 as an infantryman and served in Georgia, North Carolina, New York, Panama and Haiti before being selected for recruiting duty in 1999.

"Recruiting has given me an opportunity to share my experiences with others and help them to have some of the same great experiences," he said. "It's also made me more of a 'people' person and helped build my character."

Alden, a former active-duty infantryman who has been a recruiter since 1998, was one of the top five Reserve recruiters in his battalion in 2000 and ex-

ceeded his recruiting tasking by 60 percent in 2001.

"Recruiting has taught me that the community is full of people with diverse interests and needs," he said. Being able to listen to and understand those needs and turn peoples' dreams into realities is a sobering and satisfying experience, he added.

Alden, who recruits in Hoover, Ala., admitted it is sometimes a daunting and overwhelming experience having young people put so much trust in his career guidance. They depend on the recruiter to walk them through a maze of options that will cause them to make a life-altering decision, he said. — *Julia Bobick, U.S. Army Recruiting Command Public Affairs Office*

SFC **Ronnie Raikes**, among the first soldiers wounded in Afghanistan while fighting the war on terrorism, and **SFC Michael McElhiney**, who lost one arm in the war and had the other severely damaged, were among the invited guests at President George W. Bush's State of the Union address.

Raikes and McElhiney, both members of the Fort Campbell, Ky.,-based 5th Special Forces Group's Operational Detachment Alpha, were wounded on Dec. 5 when a 2,000-pound U.S. bomb missed its target and landed 100 yards from their position, north of Kandahar. Three special forces soldiers were killed and 19 others were injured.

Also attending the event were the unit's **CPT Jason Amerine**, who represented Operation Enduring Freedom veterans; **Renae Chapman**, the widow of **SFC Nathan Chapman**, the first American soldier killed by enemy fire in Afghanistan; and **SPC Angela Ortega**. Ortega, a member of the Military District of Washington Engineer Company at Fort Belvoir, Va., helped shore up the timbers immediately following the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon so that rescue workers could more easily reach the wounded and dead.

Other guests at the address included Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's interim leader, and flight attendants who prevented alleged shoe-bomber Richard Reid from blowing up a jetliner during a flight from Paris to Miami. — *Heike Hasenauer*

SPC **Jill Bakken** steered her two-

Raikes: (With Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki): Guest of President George W. Bush.



"Recruiting has taught me that the community is full of people with diverse interests and needs."

woman bobsled to a gold medal victory Feb. 19, winning the first women's bobsled competition ever featured in the Olympic Games.

Bakken, of the Utah Army National Guard and a member of the U.S. Army's World Class Athlete Program, drove herself and civilian Vonetta Flowers into the pages of Olympic history.

The duo's two-run total time of 1 minute, 37.76 seconds, at the Utah Olympic Park easily beat the two German teams that walked away with the silver and bronze medals.

The better-known American team of driver Jean Racine and brakeman Gea Johnson finished fifth. Johnson, hindered by an injured left hamstring, couldn't push her sled as hard or as fast as she needed to for her team to gain the gold or any other Olympic honor.

"We were the other team," said Flowers. "It's amazing that we won. The competition was tough; we definitely had our work cut out for us."

"I just knew that I had to put in two solid, clean runs," added Bakken, who made a comeback from her own significant medical problems, including back surgery and two knee operations within the past four years.

"I knew we had to have a good start, and I knew we were going to do really well on that," she said.

The award ceremony was a golden moment for two other National Guard soldiers, coaches Bill Tavares, from New York, and Tuffy Latour, from Vermont. The two, also members of the WCAP, coached the women's teams.

Head coach Tavares, a three-time Olympian, competed in the luge during the 1992 Winter Games. Latour was the driving coach. His grandfather was a bobsled driver for the United States in the 1948 Games.

History was in the winning team's corner.

Flowers became the first black American to ever

win a gold medal in the Winter Olympics. The bobsledding medal was the 21st overall for the U.S. team, whose goal was 20 medals when the Salt Lake City Games began on Feb. 8.

Bakken and Flowers gave the United States its first Olympic bobsled medal since 1956, when the U.S. men claimed the bronze.

COL Willie Davenport, chief of the National Guard Bureau's Sports Program and a five-time Olympian who won a gold medal in the high hurdles

Robert Trubia



Bakken: Celebrating victory.

during the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City, said: "This is proof that we are one Army. We come together in war, and we come together in athletics. This is also proof of how strong the National Guard is in athletics."

Bakken joined the Utah Guard's 115th Engineer Group headquarters in Draper in March 2000, before joining the WCAP. "She went from boot camp back to bobsledding," said her mother, Peggy Smith.

Bakken competed in the first official Olympic bobsledding race in her hometown of Park City, Utah. About 40 members of her family, including her mother and older brother Joel, and 10 family friends witnessed her gold-medal performance. — MSG Bob Haskell, National Guard Bureau PAO

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